DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 437 EC 161 174

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TITLE Policy Paper: Recommendations for Inclusion of Career Education, Vocational Education, Work Experience and Independent Living Skills on the Differential Standards for Graduation for Special Education Students.
PUB DATE Jun 83
NOTE 16p.; Prepared by the Differential Standards for Graduation Committee: Project Workability.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Education; Daily Living Skills; Disabilities; *Graduation Requirements; *Learning Disabilities; Secondary Education; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS California

ABSTRACT

The paper reports findings of a California committee on the need for differential graduation standards for students with learning disabilities and/or other educational handicaps. The committee proposes minimum levels of proficiency in career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills to help students gain usable skills in the labor market. Skills should be infused through the total curriculum. The broad concept of career education is examined and its principles recommended for insertion in special education, Similarly, the scope of vocational education is examined and its contributions considered. The committee asserts that differential standards should be based on applied learning in career education, vocational education, work experience and independent living skills. Recommendations are offered for such actions as establishing a task force to study policies for differential graduation standards; developing proficiency examinations based on vocational and independent living competencies; and developing inservices for parents, teachers, and community members on career/vocational and independent living skills. (CL)

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ED239437

POLICY PAPER: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSION OF CAREER EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, WORK EXPERIENCE AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS ON THE DIFFERENTIAL STANDARDS FOR GRADUATION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS.

by

Patricia L. Barrett, Committee Chairperson

With Contributions from Members of the
Differential Standards for Graduation Committee: Project Workability

June 15, 1983

EC161174

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ABSTRACT

Members of the Differential Standards Committee, Project Workability (1983), are concerned about the inability of the learning handicapped student to meet high school graduation requirements in a society where a high school diploma symbolizes passage into the world of the adult (Chandler, 1983). Special educators serving on this committee report that many of their learning handicapped students are leaving the public educational system before graduation, and those that remain have a higher truancy rate than their non-handicapped peers. These educators believe that the pressures placed on the learning handicapped students to meet proficiency standards and course requirements are monumental and contribute to these statistics.

Teachers report that high school education for learning handicapped students has deteriorated into remediation of fragmented components of proficiency examinations rather than an opportunity to gain competencies in the applied sciences, which will enhance their chances to become productive members of society.

This paper addresses these concerns and offers some educational alternatives to alleviate the problems facing our learning handicapped students. This paper centers around, 1) the infusion of career education, vocational education, work experience and independent living skills into the curriculum and on the differential standards for graduation for the learning handicapped students, and 2) the right of school districts to substitute courses in applied science for some of their high school course requirements for graduation. By doing this, education will again become a meaningful tool to prepare all students for personal and economic fulfillment in their adult life.

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Background Information

Education is the institution which provides students with the abilities needed to acquire academic, personal, and economic fulfillment in their adult lives. There have been indications, such as declining scores on standardized tests, that the educational system may not be fulfilling its obligations. More and more graduates are unable to perform rudimentary academic tasks, such as money handling or reading application blanks, while the cost of education continues to soar. (Olson, 1980, Grise, 1980).

Implications are that handicapped students leaving the school system are even less competent than their non-handicapped peers. According to the 1979 predictions made by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, of the 2,500,000 handicapped students leaving school between 1979 and 1983, only 21% would obtain full employment or be enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The remaining 79% would either be non-employed or under-employed (Rosenberg, Savage, 1981), and are being denied the opportunity to attain personal and economic fulfillment.

In this last decade, the United States has been witnessing a catalystic movement to upgrade the quality of education. Nearly three-fourths of the states have adopted or are adopting legislation requiring a minimum level of proficiency in the basic academic areas before high school diplomas may be granted. It is anticipated that through this legislation, the high school diploma will once again be indicative of excellence (Pipho, 1979; Grise, 1980; Smith and Jenkins, 1980).

California legislators, also recognizing that graduates must demonstrate some predetermined level of proficiency if society is to remain strong, have established similar laws requiring high school proficiency standards for their

graduates (AB 65--1981; AB 283--1982). California Educational Code Section 51215 states that ". . . by June 1, 1978, governing boards of each school district (shall have adopted) standards of proficiency in basic skills for pupils attending schools within its districts." Such proficiency standards "(shall) include, but need not be limited to, reading comprehension, writing, and computation skills, in the English language, necessary to success in school and life experiences . . . ." [EC 51215(a)&(c)].

Realizing that some pupils with identified learning disabilities and/or other educationally handicapping conditions would be unable to meet, or have difficulty with meeting, the proficiency standards of the general population in their schools, further amendments were made to the legislation which allowed differential standards to be developed for such students [EC 51215(d)]. (In order to establish the need for differential standards, the IEP team must determine that the student has demonstrated evidence of the inability to attain the district's regular proficiency standards without appropriate educational services and support.) If the IEP team determines that the diagnosed disability is so severe that the district's proficiency standards cannot be met, the IEP team has the option of modifying the district's differential standards or of developing a unique set of proficiency standards for that student [EC51215(d)(1)&(2)]. In either case, the IEP must reflect the means the student will use to "meet or exceed proficiency standards for graduation" [EC 56345(b)(3)+(9)].

Several districts in California were contacted by this Committee in March, 1983, to determine which of their learning handicapped students required differential standards or modified differential standards in order to graduate. A 1981 report from San Juan Unified School District (Enell, 1982) is indicative of the response by these school districts. In San Juan, 94-95% of students

enrolled in the Resource Specialists Programs are able to pass the district's regular proficiency standards either through a written examination or with some modifications of means or mode. Students in the Special Day Class programs are, on the whole, unable to meet either the district regular or differential standards and require unique or modified differential standards in order to graduate.

Since differential standards are intended to allow educationally disabled students the opportunity to demonstrate a level of competency in required subject areas appropriate to their needs and potential, this committee strongly recommends that career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills be included in the differential proficiency standards for students unable to meet the proficiency standards established by local governing boards.

Purpose of Policy Paper

It is the intent of this policy paper to propose that minimum levels of proficiency in career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills be accepted as the basic curricular framework for the development of differential standards for graduation for learning handicapped students for whom an IEP team determined regular proficiency standards are inappropriate. It is proposed that handicapped students who develop a level of proficiency in these areas will be able to enter the labor market with the salable skills needed to attain economic usefulness and/or achieve their maximum level of independent living.

It is also proposed that career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills should not be taught in isolation, but rather be infused throughout regular curriculum to insure that the academic

skills are applied to real life situations. (See Addendum I for suggestions on instructing students in basic academics utilizing a vocational emphasis.)

Differential proficiency standards for graduation should be developed to measure these same applied career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills concepts at the minimum level established by, and reflecting the standards of, the district's governing board so that handicapped students who graduate under differential standards will demonstrate a measurable level of proficiency in a range of work related skills.

Vocationally Oriented Differential Standards for the Learning Handicapped Must Reflect the Needs of the Student and Society

In a recent employer survey, approximately 600 business men and women in San Bernardino County who employ persons with little or no specialized training were asked why they terminated employees in their business. The results are listed below:

Tardiness	23.8%
Doesn't follow directions	29.3%
Doesn't take work seriously	24.5%
Employee tired of work	22.0%
Poor attitude toward public	18.6%
Temporary work	14.7%
Absenteeism	10.8%
Alcohol/Drugs	8.5%
Poor attitude toward employees	7.5%
Production accuracy	6.7%
Production speed	6.7%
Other	13.0%

Employers were allowed to select up to three reasons for termination, consequently, the totals do not equal 100% (California Project #82-03705-1033-01, 1982).

Through a vocationally oriented curriculum for learning handicapped students graduating under differential standards, many of these poor worker traits could be addressed and remediation programs offered before students graduate from

high school. This committee feels that it is imperative that students who will require differential standards for graduation be identified early so that career and vocational training becomes an ongoing part of their educational program [ED 563456(b)(2)&(3)].

Special Educators report frustration from having to teach and reteach pure academic proficiencies which the learning handicapped students are unable to master. They report that the drop out rate for their students is high, and attendance records low, because a fragmented curriculum is necessary in order to remediate missed components of high school proficiency examinations. Teachers believe that for the more severely learning disabled student there is little correlation between the regular written high school proficiency examination and real life situations faced by these students upon graduation. Many parents also feel that special education programs are not preparing the learning handicapped students to lead productive, satisfying adult lives. This committee recommends that a set of guidelines for the development of differential proficiency standards based on adaptive career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills be developed and made available to all school districts in order to insure that this happens.

What is Career Education?

Kenneth B. Hoyt, Associate Commissioner of Education (1979), believes that career education is the "total effort of public education and the community aimed at helping all individuals become familiar with the work values of a work oriented society" (Hoyt, 1975). Hoyt also states that personal fulfillment is as crucial to life as is instilling the work ethic concept. This reinforces the "official" definition of Career Education which was adopted by the U.S. Office of Education in 1974 which states that, "Career education is the totality of

experience through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work as part of his/her way of life" (Brolin, Koskask, 1981).

Career education is the means to integrate school, family, and community to facilitate the students' potential for economic, social, and personal fulfillment. Career education teaches handicapped students how to live, as well as, how to earn a living (Gillett, 1978; USOE, 1974). It is not, however, a substitute for basic education, rather, it brings meaning to the curriculum by making individuals more aware of themselves, their potential, and their educational needs.

Career education is developmental. The California State Department of Education has identified four distinct stages through which students progress in their quest to learn how to live and how to earn a living. These stages correlate closely with the developmental stages of such theorists as Piaget, Erickson, and Havinghurst. (Tenneyson, 1980) The stages are as follows:

Grades K-6	CAREER AWARENESS:	Self Awareness, Occupational Awareness, Attitude Development, Educational Awareness, and Economic Awareness.
Grades 7-8	CAREER ORIENTATION:	Consumer Competencies, and Career Orientation
Grades 9-10	CAREER EXPLORATION:	Career Planning and Decision Making, and Career Exploration.
Grades 11-12	CAREER PREPARATION:	Work Experience, Job Seeking Skills, Job Keeping Skills, On-The-Job Training, and Regional Occupational Programs.

When handicapped students are provided these components in career education they are better able to make realistic, appropriate career choices based on their own individual abilities and interest. Career education helps students identify their career goals and develop an awareness of how to meet these goals.

Career education and vocational education are crucial components in the design of education as they provide the training needed to ensure successful entrance into the adult society. Career and vocational education instill work

values in our work oriented society and help students develop the framework to pursue the career options compatible to their interests and abilities. Special Educators should be inserviced as needed to increase their understanding of career education and methods for infusing these principals into curriculum, because the competencies students must acquire to be competitive in the adult work world are not metamorphic, they are learned. Only when differential standards are based on career education concepts will all special education students have the opportunity to develop these competencies.

What is Vocational Education

PL 94-142 and PL 94-482 utilizes the Code of Federal Regulation's definition of vocational education which states that "Vocational education means organized educational programs which are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment, or for additional preparation for a career requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree." (Sec. 303.14) Vocational education is designed to build mastery of a competency to a standard that is set by a governing occupational group by teaching the entry level skills required for a specific job such as Restaurant Occupations or Cosmetology. (Healy, 1982) Vocational education is a component of Career Education's stage four: CAREER PREPARATION.

Vocational education, part of which encompasses work experience, is not a new concept. It had its foundations in the very beginnings of our western civilization when apprenticeships were an expected part of a young person's training, whether for a craft or a profession. What is new, however, is its implementation as a curriculum for the handicapped. In the 1982 California legislative session, Education Code Section 56345 was amended to mandate the assessment of "career and vocational abilities and interests"; and include

prevocational and vocational education, career education or work experience as a mandated component of the IEPs of all handicapped students when appropriate [EC 56345(b)(1),(2)&(3)].

Our legislators have recognized the importance of providing the means for the handicapped to become productive, competitive members of our society, but they need to go one step further. A provision must be made which allows the differential standards for graduation to be based on career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills so that the learning handicapped students graduate with the competencies needed to enter the world of work. When this is done, the cycle will be complete.

Differential Standards: Issues and Recommendations for Reform

The Differential Standards Committee, Project Workability, met in Sacramento, California, on May 5, 1983, to discuss issues and possible solutions to the problems facing special education students who are actively seeking a high school diploma.

The primary issue addressed at the meeting was that learning handicapped students in California are having to devote such a large percentage of their academic day to preparing for high school proficiency examinations and in meeting minimum academic course requirements for graduation that, out of necessity, preparation for economic and personal independence is often ignored.

The concensus of committee members was that if differential standards for graduation were based on applied learning in career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills, learning handicapped students would have the opportunity to develop the skills required by a work oriented society.

The specific issues and recommendations addressed by the Differential Standards Committee are listed below:

ISSUE I - There is a tremendous diversity in the requirements for graduation for special education students in California ranging from the unattainable, to granting a diploma just because the student meets current IEP goals.

ISSUE II - The 1982-83 Project Workability data indicates that many students in special education programs are completing high school without employable skills and the ability to sustain independent living.

ISSUE III - State guidelines for the development of differential proficiency standards for graduation are non existent.

ISSUE IV - Educational Code Section 56345 requires that prevocational and vocational education, career education and work experience be included in handicapped students' IEPs, but differential standards for graduation for these same students do not measure abilities in these areas.

ISSUE V - Some state mandated course requirements for graduation are unrealistic for some special education students, and the rights of local school boards to substitute vocationally oriented courses for certain academic courses is unclear.

ISSUE VI - Members of the community, parents, educators and school board members generally lack an understanding of the meaning of the terms: career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills and how to infuse their concepts into the IEP goals and differential standards for graduation for special education students.

The Committee Recommends that the State Department of Education:

A. Establish a task force to:

1. Study state wide policies for granting high school diplomas to special education graduating under differential standards processes.

2. Compile statistics by district on the percentage of special education students completing their high school requirements and being awarded a diploma.

3. Investigate the correlation between the drop out rate of special education students and the high school graduation requirements in their districts.

B. Research availability of vocationally oriented courses to handicapped students and percentage of special education students enrolled in these courses in relation to general population by school districts.

C. Utilizing exemplary programs, develop a state wide sample set of proficiency examinations based on vocational and independent living competencies.

(Include members from school districts who already have such programs on the committee developing these proficiencies. Guidelines should be flexible enough for adaptation to a district's regular proficiency standards.)

D. Provide a set of sample guidelines for local school districts to follow in developing applied academic courses that would be comparable to high school course requirements for graduation. These courses would teach the same high school competencies but with a vocational emphasis. (Example: Agriculture or Basic Physics courses meet Science requirements.)

E. Develop a series of inservices throughout the State for parents, educators, and community members on the purpose and importance of career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills for special education students.

F. Develop a state wide sample curriculum in career education, vocational education, work experience, and independent living skills for special education students. Courses should also be developed to teach pre-vocational competencies such as "Introduction to Small Engines" for junior high students to prepare them for high school vocational courses.

G. Establish a dissemination system to assist local educational agencies with the development of curriculum and proficiency standards for special education students.

H. Investigate the implementation of a vocationally oriented high school diploma for those students requiring <u>unique</u> or <u>modified</u> differential standards for graduation.

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ADDENDUM I

Examples of Modifications to Curriculum for the Learning Handicapped Graduating Under Unique Differential Standards. (Compiled by Nancy Johnson, Tuolumne County Special Education from minutes of the Project Workability: Differential Standards Committee Meeting, February 24 & 25, 1983; Sacramento, California.)

The Project Workability Differential Standards Committee met to investigate the possibilities of districts directly relating their differential proficiency standards to the applied skills that are necessary for economic usefulness and personal fulfillment in the students' adult lives. Some suggested methods by which these standards could be adapted to the academic competencies required by districts are as follows:

1. Special Education, Vocational Education Class - A student's special education teacher could verify mastery of minimum reading skills through using newspaper want ads. The student could demonstrate basic writing skills by correctly filling out a job application, and the student could demonstrate competent math skills by balancing a simulated (or real) checking account, etc. (Job seeking skills are only one facet of vocational education.)

2. Daily Living Skills Class - (This class could be taught in either the special education or regular education department.) The teacher could verify mastery of specific skills written into the student's differential standards on his/her IEP, or successful completion of requirements for a Daily Living Skills class could be a goal in itself. A passing grade could satisfy a variety of competencies as listed in the course description.

3. Regular Education Vocational Education Class - The IEP team could select specific skills from a vocational education class to be used as competencies for a student. The vocational education teacher could verify whether each competency was met. A special education student enrolled in an auto shop class, for instance, could be working on some of his or her differential standards for math through the measurement and calibration skills required in the shop setting.

4. Work Experience Education - A student's differential standards could be linked to an actual job placement. For instance, if vocational assessment or student motivation narrows vocational training to a specific area, a work experience placement could be planned by the IEP team. A student with good mechanical ability but severe reading problems might be placed at a lawn mower repair shop for training. The IEP team could determine that the modified differential standards would consist of being able to take in orders, write down the customer's complaints and phone number, repair common malfunctions independently, relate politely to the customer, and perhaps use the phone and phone book to order needed parts independently, etc.